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OFFICE OF PETITIONS

In re Application of:

Frank

Filed: 26 October, 2000

Application No. 09/696,812

Docket No.: 600.1095

ON PETITION

This is a decision on the petition filed herein on 30 May, 2003, under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a)¹ to revive the above-identified application as abandoned due to unavoidable delay, and in light of the allegations also considered as a request to withdraw the holding of abandonment under 37 C.F.R. §1.181.²

¹ A Petition filed under the provisions of 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) must be accompanied by:

- (1) The required reply, unless previously filed. In a nonprovisional application abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may be met by the filing of a continuing application. In an application for patent, abandoned or lapsed for failure to pay the issue fee or any portion thereof, the required reply must be the payment of the issue fee or any outstanding balance thereof;
- (2) the petition fee required by 37 C.F.R. §1.17(l);
- (3) A showing to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the reply due date until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to the is paragraph was unavoidable; and
- (4) Any terminal disclaimer (and fee set forth in 37 C.F.R. §1.20(d)) required pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.137(c).

An application is "unavoidably" abandoned only where Petitioner (or Petitioner's counsel) takes all action necessary for a proper response to the outstanding Office action, but through the intervention of unforeseen circumstances, the response is not timely received in the Office. That is, in the context of ordinary human affairs the test is such care as is generally used and observed by prudent and careful persons in relation to their most important business. Ex parte Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31 (Comm'r Pat. 1887); Ex parte Henrich, 1913 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 139, 141 (Comm'r. Pat. 1913).

² The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.181 provide, in pertinent part:
§1.181 Petition to the Commissioner.

(a) Petition may be taken to the Commissioner: (1) From any action or requirement of any examiner in the *ex parte* prosecution of an application which is not subject to appeal to the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences or to the court; (2) In cases in which a statute or the rules specify that the matter is to be determined directly by or reviewed by the Commissioner; and (3) To invoke the supervisory authority of the Commissioner in appropriate circumstances. * * *

(b) Any such petition must contain a statement of the facts involved and the point or points to be reviewed and the action requested. Brief or memoranda, if any, in support thereof should accompany or be embodied in the petition; and where facts are to be proven, the proof in the form of affidavits or declaration (and exhibits, if any) must accompany the petition.

(c) When a petition is taken from an action or requirement of an examiner in the *ex parte* prosecution of an application, it may be required that there have been a proper request for reconsideration (§1.111) and a repeated action by the examiner. The examiner may be directed by the Commissioner to furnish a written statement, within a specified time, setting forth the reasons for his decision upon the matters averred in the petition, supplying a copy thereof to the petitioner.

(d) Where a fee is required for a petition to the Commissioner the appropriate section of this part will so indicate. If any required fee does not accompany the petition, the petition will be dismissed. * * *

For the reasons set forth below, the petition:

- considered as a request to withdraw the holding of abandonment under 37 C.F.R. §1.181 is **DISMISSED**; and
- under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) to revive the application alleging unavoidable delay is **DISMISSED**.

NOTES:

- (1) Any petition (and fee) for reconsideration of this decision under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) (as to unavoidable delay) or an alternative request for relief under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b)³ (as to unintentional delay) must be submitted within two (2) months from the mail date of this decision. Extensions of time under 37 C.F.R. §1.136(a) are permitted. The reconsideration request should include a cover letter entitled "Renewed Petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a)"; and/or "Petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b)";
- (2) Thereafter, there will be no further reconsideration of this matter.

BACKGROUND

A review of the record reveals:

- Petitioner failed to respond timely and properly to the final Office action mailed on 26 August, 2002, with reply due (absent extension of time) on or before 26 November, 2002;

(f) Except as otherwise provided in these rules, any such petition not filed within 2 months from the action complained of, may be dismissed as untimely. The mere filing of a petition will not stay the period for reply to an Examiner's action which may be running against an application, nor act as a stay of other proceedings. * * * (Emphasis supplied.)

³ Effective December 1, 1997, the provisions of 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) now provide that where the delay in reply was unintentional, a petition may be filed to revive an abandoned application or a lapsed patent pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b). a grantable petition filed under the provisions of 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) must be accompanied by:

(1) the required reply, unless previously filed. In a nonprovisional application abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may be met by the filing of a continuing application. In an application or patent, abandoned or lapsed for failure to pay the issue fee or any portion thereof, the required reply must be the payment of the issue fee or any outstanding balance thereof.

(2) the petition fee as set forth in 37 C.F.R. §1.17(m);

(3) a statement that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) was unintentional. The Commissioner may require additional information where there is a question whether the delay was unintentional; and

(4) any terminal disclaimer (and fee set forth in 37 C.F.R. §1.20(d)) required pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.137(c). (Emphasis supplied.)

- over a 22 November, 2002, certificate of mail (on the transmittal form) Petitioner filed an after-final amendment (see: 37 C.F.R. §1.116⁴) on 29 November, 2002--however, the Examiner deemed the amendment not a proper reply⁵ to the final Office action, refused to enter it, and mailed an Advisory Action on 19 December, 2002, so notifying Petitioner;
- the instant application went abandoned after midnight 26 November, 2002;
- no Notice of Abandonment was mailed before the instant petition was filed on 30 May, 2003;
- with the instant petition, Petitioner:
 - filed on 30 May, 2003, *inter alia*, copies of: (a) a Notice of Appeal, (b) a check in the amount of \$730.00 in payment for the Notice of Appeal and a two- (2-) month extension of time and (2) an unstamped receipt card (see: MPEP §503⁶);

⁴ The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.116 provide:

§1.116 Amendments after final action or appeal.

(a) An amendment after final action or appeal must comply with § 1.114 or this section.

(b) After a final rejection or other final action (§1.113) in an application or in an *ex parte* reexamination filed under §1.510, or an action closing prosecution (§ 1.949) in an *inter partes* reexamination filed under §1.913, amendments may be made canceling claims or complying with any requirement of form expressly set forth in a previous Office action. Amendments presenting rejected claims in better form for consideration on appeal may be admitted. The admission of, or refusal to admit, any amendment after a final rejection, a final action, an action closing prosecution, or any related proceedings will not operate to relieve the application or patent under reexamination from its condition as subject to appeal or to save the application from abandonment under §1.135, or the reexamination from termination. No amendment can be made in an *inter partes* reexamination proceeding after the right of appeal notice under §1.953 except as provided for in paragraph (d) of this section.

(c) If amendments touching the merits of the application or patent under reexamination are presented after final rejection, or after appeal has been taken, or when such amendment might not otherwise be proper, they may be admitted upon a showing of good and sufficient reasons why they are necessary and were not earlier presented.

(d) No amendment can be made as a matter of right in appealed cases. After decision on appeal, amendments can only be made as provided in §§1.198 and 1.981, or to carry into effect a recommendation under § 1.196 or § 1.977.

[24 FR 10332, Dec. 22, 1959; 46 FR 29183, May 29, 1981; para. (a) revised, 62 FR 53131, Oct. 10, 1997, effective Dec. 1, 1997; revised, 65 FR 14865, Mar. 20, 2000, effective May 29, 2000 (adopted as final, 65 FR 50092, Aug. 16, 2000); paras. (b) and (d) revised, 65 FR 76756, Dec. 7, 2000, effective Feb. 5, 2001]

⁵ The proper response to the final Office action (see: Fn. 1, item (1); MPEP 711.03(c)) must be in the form of: (a) an amendment *prima facie* placing the application in condition for allowance; (b) a Notice of Appeal; or (c) a Continuing Application or Request for Continued Examination (RCE) (with fee and submission) under 37 C.F.R. §1.114.

⁶ The commentary at MPEP §503 provides in pertinent part:

§503 Application Number and Filing Receipt

37 C.F.R. §1.54. *Parts of application to be filed together; filing receipt.*

(a) It is desirable that all parts of the complete application be deposited in the Office together; otherwise, a letter must accompany each part, accurately and clearly connecting it with the other parts of the application. See § 1.53(f) and (g) with regard to completion of an application.

If a self-addressed postcard is submitted with a patent application, that postcard will be provided with both the receipt date and application number prior to returning it to the addressee. The application number identified on such a postcard receipt is merely the preliminary assignment of an application number to the application, and should not be relied upon (e.g., with respect to foreign filings) as necessarily representing the application number assigned to such application. See 37 C.F.R. 1.53(b). The identifying data on the postcard should include:

(A) applicant's name(s);

(B) title of invention;

(C) number of pages of specification, claims (for nonprovisional applications), and sheets of drawing;

(D) whether oath or declaration is included;

(E) a list of any additional forms included with the application (e.g., application transmittal form, application data sheet, fee transmittal form, and/or

and

--alleged that the foregoing items had been submitted over a 24 January, 2003, certificate of mailing, and, thus, he timely and properly replied to the 26 August, 2002, final Office action.⁷

Petitioner submits no copies of docket records, file jacket covers, mail logs or like documents in support of the allegation of timely filing or unavoidable delay.

STATUTES, REGULATIONS AND ANALYSIS

Congress has authorized the Commissioner to "revive an application if the delay is shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner to have been "unavoidable." 35 U.S.C. §133 (1994).⁸

provisional application cover sheet); and
(F) amount and manner of paying the fee.

A return postcard should be attached to *each* patent application for which a receipt is desired. It is important that the return postcard itemize all of the components of the application. If the postcard does not itemize each of the components of the application, it will not serve as evidence that any component which was not itemized was received by the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO).

RETURN POSTCARD

If a receipt of any item (e.g., paper or fee) filed in the USPTO is desired, it may be obtained by enclosing with the paper a self-addressed postcard specifically identifying the item. The USPTO will stamp the receipt date on the postcard and place it in the outgoing mail. A postcard receipt which itemizes and properly identifies the items which are being filed serves as *prima facie* evidence of receipt in the USPTO of all the items listed thereon on the date stamped thereon by the USPTO.

The identifying data on the postcard should be so complete as to clearly identify the item for which receipt is requested. For example, the postcard should identify the applicant's name, application number (if known), confirmation number (if known), filing date, interference number, title of the invention, etc. The postcard should also identify the type of paper being filed, e.g., new application, affidavit, amendment, notice of appeal, appeal brief, drawings, fees, motions, supplemental oath or declaration, petition, etc., and the number of pages being submitted. If a new application is being filed, all parts of the application being submitted should be separately listed on the postcard, e.g., the number of pages of specification (including written description, claims and abstract), number of claims, number of sheets of drawings, number of pages of oath/declaration, number of pages of cover sheet (provisional application). The postcard receipt will not serve as *prima facie* evidence of receipt of any item which is not adequately itemized on the postcard. For example, merely listing on the postcard "a complete application" or "patent application" will not serve as a proper receipt for each of the required components of an application (e.g., specification (including claims), drawings (if necessary), oath or declaration and the application filing fee) or missing portions (e.g., pages, sheets of drawings) of an application if one of the components or portion of a component is found to be missing by the USPTO. Each separate component should be specifically and properly itemized on the postcard. Furthermore, merely incorporating by reference in the postcard receipt, the items listed in a transmittal letter will not serve as *prima facie* evidence of receipt of those items.

The person receiving the item(s) in the USPTO will check the listing on the postcard against the item(s) being filed to be sure they are properly identified and that all the items listed on the postcard are presently being submitted to the USPTO. If any of the items listed on the postcard are not being submitted to the USPTO, those items will be crossed off and the post-card initialed by the person receiving the items.

Upon return of a postcard receipt from the USPTO, the postcard receipt should be promptly reviewed by the person who filed the items to ensure that every item specifically denoted on the postcard was received by the USPTO. If the postcard receipt has been annotated to indicate that a particular item denoted on the postcard was not received by the USPTO, the postcard receipt will not serve as *prima facie* evidence of receipt of that item in the USPTO.

⁷ Petitioner repeatedly alleges that he responded to "the December 19, 2002[,] Advisory Action[.]" but as is clear from the Advisory Action itself, any response was due following the 26 August, 2002, final Office action.

⁸ 35 U.S.C. §133 provides:

35 U.S.C. §133 Time for prosecuting application.

Upon failure of the applicant to prosecute the application within six months after any action therein, of which notice has been given or mailed to the applicant, or within such shorter time, not less than thirty days, as fixed by the Commissioner in such action, the application shall be regarded as

The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) and (b) set forth the requirements for a petitioner to revive a previously unavoidably or unintentionally, respectively, abandoned application under this congressional grant of authority.

The language of 35 U.S.C. §133 and 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) is clear, unambiguous, and without qualification: the delay in tendering the reply to the outstanding Office action, as well as filing the first petition seeking revival, must have been unavoidable for the reply now to be accepted on petition.⁹

Delays in responding properly raise the question whether delays are unavoidable.¹⁰ Where there is a question whether the delay was unavoidable, Petitioners must meet the burden of establishing that the delay was unavoidable within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. §133 and 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a).¹¹

And the Petitioner must be diligent in attending to the matter.¹² Failure to do so does not constitute the care required under Pratt, and so cannot satisfy the test for diligence and due care.

(By contrast, unintentional delays are those that do not satisfy the very strict statutory and regulatory requirements of unavoidable delay, and also, by definition, are not intentional.¹³)

Allegations as to the Request to Withdraw
the Holding of Abandonment and
the Petition Alleging Unavoidable Delay

The courts have determined the construct for properly supporting a petition seeking withdrawal of a holding of abandonment.¹⁴

A delay is not “unavoidable” when an applicant simply fails to file properly and timely the

abandoned by the parties thereto, unless it be shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that such delay was unavoidable.

⁹ Therefore, by example, an unavoidable delay in the payment of the Filing Fee might occur if a reply is shipped by the US Postal Service, but due to catastrophic accident, the delivery is not made.

¹⁰ See: Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure; Final Rule Notice, 62 Fed. Reg. at 53158-59 (October 10, 1997), 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office at 86-87 (October 21, 1997).

¹¹ See: In re Application of G, 11 USPQ2d 1378, 1380 (Comm'r Pats. 1989).

¹² See: Diligence in Filing Petitions to Revive and Petitions to Withdraw the Holding of Abandonment, 1124 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office 33 (March 19, 1991). It was and is Petitioner's burden to exercise diligence in seeking either to have the holding of abandonment withdrawn or the application revived. See 1124 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office supra.

¹³ Therefore, by example, an unintentional delay in the reply might occur if the reply and transmittal form are to be prepared for shipment by the US Postal Service, but other pressing matters distract one's attention and the mail is not timely deposited for shipment.

¹⁴ See: Delgar v. Schulver, 172 USPQ 513 (D.D.C. 1971).

required reply and so permits the maximum extendable statutory period for reply to expire.¹⁵

In determining if a delay was unavoidable, decisions on reviving abandoned applications have adopted the standard of the reasonably prudent person acting in their most important business matters.¹⁶ In addition, decisions on revival are made on a "case-by-case basis, taking all the facts and circumstances into account."¹⁷

The Office does not doubt that the documents in question--to wit: a Notice of Appeal, a check in the amount of \$730.00 in payment for the Notice of Appeal and a two- (2-) month extension of time and an unstamped receipt card--may have been prepared for submission on 24 January, 2003, however, as of this writing there is no support for the allegation that those documents were in fact submitted.

Therefore, Petitioner has failed to satisfy the showing as required under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a), much less those required under 37 C.F.R. §1.181--the relief sought cannot be granted.

(Presuming for the purposes of discussion that it was an act/omission of Counsel that contributed to any of the delay herein, the act(s) or omissions of the attorney/agent are imputed wholly to the applicant/client¹⁸ in the absence of evidence that the attorney/agent has acted to deceive the client.¹⁹)

It long has been the position of the Office that the use of the filing periods (such as in 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b)) as an "extension of time" is an "abuse" of the procedures for reviving abandoned applications, and is contrary to the meaning and intent of the regulation.²⁰ The Office has

¹⁵ See MPEP 711.03(c)(III)(C)(2).

¹⁶ Ex parte Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31, 32-33 (Comm'r Pat. 1887) (the term "unavoidable" "is applicable to ordinary human affairs, and requires no more or greater care or diligence than is generally used and observed by prudent and careful men in relation to their most important business"); In re Mattullath, 38 App. D.C. 497, 514-15 (D.C. Cir. 1912); Ex parte Henrich, 1913 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 139, 141 (Comm'r Pat. 1913).

¹⁷ Smith v. Mossinghoff, 671 F.2d 533, 538, 213 USPQ 977, 982 (D.C. Cir. 1982).

¹⁸ The actions or inactions of the attorney/agent must be imputed to the petitioners, who hired the attorney/agent to represent them. Link v. Wabash Railroad Co., 370 U.S. 626, 633-634, 82 S.Ct. 1386, 1390-91 (1962).

The failure of a party's attorney to take a required action or to notify the party of its rights does not create an extraordinary situation. Moreover, the neglect of a party's attorney is imputed to that party and the party is bound by the consequences. See Huston v. Ladner, 973 F.2d 1564, 23 USPQ2d 1910 (Fed Cir. 1992); Herman Rosenberg and Parker-Kalon Corp. v. Carr Fastener Co., 10 USPQ 106 (2d Cir. 1931).

¹⁹ When an attorney intentionally conceals a mistake he has made, thus depriving the client of a viable opportunity to cure the consequences of the attorney's error, the situation is not governed by the stated rule in Link for charging the attorney's mistake to his client. In re Lonardo, 17 USPQ2d 1455 (Comm'r. Pat. 1990).

²⁰ See: In re Application of S, 8 USPQ2d 1630, 1632 (Comm'r Pats. 1988). Where there is a question whether the delay was unintentional, the petitioner must meet a burden of establishing that the delay was unintentional within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) and 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b). See: In re Application of G, 11 USPQ2d 1378, 1380 (Comm'r Pats. 1989).

indicated that petitions to revive must be filed promptly after the applicant becomes aware of the abandonment.²¹

Delays such as here are inconsistent with a showing of diligence in the prosecution of the instant application,²² and this course of action may preclude revival of the application under 37 C.F.R. §1.137.²³

Accordingly, Petitioner has failed to establish to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that the delay was "unavoidable" within the meaning of 37 C.F.R. §1.137.²⁴

Should the Petitioner wish to continue to seek revival, he must evidence that the delay--at the very least--was not intentional (and so plead the matter as required under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b).²⁵ (See: "Alternative Venue," below.)

CONCLUSION

Because Petitioner failed to satisfy the burdens set forth in Delgar v. Schulyer, the petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.181 must be and hereby is **dismissed**.

Moreover, the instant petition fails to satisfy the "showing" requirement as to relief sought.

Therefore, in the absence of those requirements, the petition herein 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) must be **dismissed**.

²¹ See: Diligence in Filing Petitions to Revive and Petitions to Withdraw the Holding of Abandonment, 1124 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office 33 (March 19, 1991). It was and is Petitioner's burden to exercise diligence in seeking either to have the holding of abandonment withdrawn or the application revived. See 1124 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office supra.

²² The test of diligence in the prosecution of an application before the Commissioner is, in the context of ordinary human affairs, the test is such care as is generally used and observed by prudent and careful persons in relation to their most important business. Ex parte Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31 (Comm'r Pat. 1887); Ex parte Henrich, 1913 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 139, 141 (Comm'r. Pat. 1913).

²³ That an applicant may have been preoccupied with other matters that took precedence over the revival of an abandoned application is not viewed as an adequate justification for delay. See Smith v. Mossinghoff, 671 F.2d 533, 538, 213 USPQ 977, 982 (D.C. Cir. 1982). Rather, the revival of an application that was not intentionally abandoned is the applicant's "most important business." See Ex parte Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pats. 31, 32-33 (1887). Specifically, an applicant seeking revival of an abandoned application is expected to file a petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.137 within two to three months of discovering its abandonment. See In re Kokaji, 1 USPQ2d 2005, 2007 (Comm'r Pats. 1986); see also Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure; Final Rule Notice, 62 Fed. Reg. at 53161, 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office at 88-89 (response to comment 65).

²⁴ See Application of G, 11 USPQ2d at 1380; In re Application of S, Id.

²⁵ Any renewed petition should include copies of any correspondence or communications between counsel and applicant, that would rebut any inference that the filing of the first petition to revive was intentionally delayed. This showing should include, but is not limited to, docket records, tickler reports, and file jacket entries for this application. Petitioner must also supply declarations from himself and Counsel (and all staff of Counsel who may have contributed to the delays) in this regard.

ALTERNATIVE VENUE

It appears that Petitioner is unable to make a showing of unavoidable delay surpassing that tendered heretofore. As a result, Petitioner's only alternative to irretrievable abandonment is to file a petition and fee (as set forth at NOTE 1, above at page 2) under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b), and state therein that "the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) was unintentional."

Thus, Petitioner may wish to supplement his petition to plead alternatively under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) wherein the "showing" burden is much less onerous. Petitioner is cautioned that failure to submit such a petition 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) timely may be viewed as intentional delay and an absolute bar to revival.

Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows:

By mail: (Effective 1 May, 2003)²⁶
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

By FAX: (703) 308-6916
ATTN.: Office of Petitions

By hand: Crystal Plaza Four, Suite CP4-3C23
2201 South Clark Place
Arlington, VA 22202

Telephone inquiries concerning this decision may be directed to the undersigned at (703) 305-9199.



John J. Gillon, Jr.
Senior Attorney
Office of Petitions

²⁶ To determine the appropriate addresses for other subject-specific correspondence, refer to the USPTO Web site at www.uspto.gov.